

Windy-Shingle Purpose and Need

The 23,000-acre Windy-Shingle project area (Figure 1-1) is located approximately five miles west of Riggins, Idaho. The project area is located entirely on National Forest System (NFS) lands in Idaho County, Idaho, in Township 24 North, Range 1 West, Sections 9-17, 20-29, 32-35; T23N, R1W, Sections 1-10, 12, 13, 24, 25, 36; T23N, R1E, Sections 7, 19, 30, 31, 32; T22N, R1W, Section 1; T22N, R1E, Sections 5, 6, Boise Meridian. The project area includes S. Creek, Rough Creek, Shingle Creek tributaries to the Lower Salmon River; and un-named tributaries from Windy Ridge and Indian Creek, tributaries to the Little Salmon River. Some non-Forest Service lands within the project area, and no activities are proposed on private lands.

The project area is adjacent to privately managed lands and lands managed by the Wallowa-Whitman National Forest in Hells Canyon Wilderness; the Bureau of Land Management; and Idaho Department of Lands.

This project is to be developed to address forest health and hazardous fuel concerns under the authority of the Healthy Forest Restoration Act (16 USC Chapter 84, as amended).

The project area is within the Riggins-West area designated as part of an insect and disease treatment program in accordance with Title VI, Section 602, of the Healthy Forest Restoration Act (HFRA), as amended by Section 8204 of the Agriculture Act (Farm Bill) of 2014. This area that was designated by Governor Butch Otter on March 31, 2014, is:

1. Experiencing declining forest health, based on annual forest health surveys conducted by the Secretary;
2. At risk of experiencing substantially increased tree mortality over the next 15 years due to insect or disease infestation based on the most recent National Insect and Disease Risk Map published by the Forest Service; or
3. In an area in which the risk of hazard trees poses an imminent risk to public infrastructure, health or safety.

Relationship of this project to Section 8204 of the 2014 Farm Bill

The Windy-Shingle project Purpose and Need has been specifically developed to be consistent with Section 8204 of the Farm Bill (Public Law 113-79), which amended Title VI of HFRA (16 U.S.C. 6591 et seq.) to add Sections 602 and 603. Section 603 establishes a categorical exclusion from the requirement to conduct an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement for qualifying insect and disease projects in designated areas on National Forest System lands. A project may be categorically excluded under this authority if it is designed to reduce the risk or extent of, or increase the resilience to, insect or disease infestation in the areas (HFRA, Sections 602(d) and 603(a)). These are routine projects that we have conducted for decades and they do not, under typical circumstances, have significant impacts on the environment.

This categorical exclusion may be used to carry out an insect and disease project in an insect and disease treatment area designated by the Secretary under section 602. Landscape scale areas may be designated by the Secretary if they meet at least one of the criteria found in HFRA, Sections 602(c)(1)(2) & (3).

The Windy-Shingle project will be consistent with this authority:

- Falls within a landscape in Condition Classes 2 or 3 in Fire Regime Groups I, II, or III, outside the wildland urban interface. (HFRA, Sections 603(c)(2)(A) & (B))
- Is not a component of the National Wilderness System (HFRA, Sections 603(d)(1))
- Does not include any federal land on which, by Act of Congress or Presidential proclamation, the removal of vegetation is restricted or prohibited (HFRA, Sections 603(d)(2))
- Does not fall within a congressionally designated wilderness study area (HFRA, Sections 603(d)(3)); and
- Falls within an area in which activities designed to address the needs would be consistent with the Nez Perce National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (HFRA, Sections 603(d)(4))
- Shall be consistent with all applicable standards and guidelines in the Nez Perce National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan

The Windy-Shingle project will carry out a forest restoration treatment that (HFRA, Sections 603(b)(1)(A)-(C):

- Maximizes the retention of old-growth and large trees, as appropriate for the forest type, to the extent that the trees promote stands that are resilient to insects and disease;
- Considers the best available scientific information to maintain or restore the ecological integrity, including maintaining or restoring structure, function, composition, and connectivity; and
- Will be developed and implemented through a collaborative process that—
 - includes multiple interested persons representing diverse interests; and is transparent and nonexclusive; or
 - meets the requirements for a resource advisory committee under subsections (c) through (f) of section 205 of the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act of 2000 (16 U.S.C. 7125).

Total acres to be treated in the Windy-Shingle project to address Insect and Disease concerns will not exceed 3,000 acres. (HFRA, Section 603(c)(1))

The Windy-Shingle project includes the following limitations relating to roads (HFRA, Section 603(c)(3)):

- does not include the establishment of permanent roads.
- may carry out necessary maintenance and repairs on existing permanent roads for purposes of this section.
- shall decommission any temporary road constructed under a project under this section not later than 3 years after the date on which the project is completed.

Land and Resource Management Plan and Other Direction

The project is expected to meet the following Forest-wide standards and guidelines, and the Management Area direction. The proposed action responds to the goals and objectives outlined in the Nez Perce National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (USDA-FS 1987a, as amended), and should improve conditions in the project area to bring them more in line with the desired future conditions described in the plan.

Direction for the project is provided in the Standards and Guidelines of the Nez Perce Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan; USDA-FS 1987 as amended). Forest-wide management direction related to this project can be found on pages II-1-2, and includes Goals 1, 3, 4, 6, 10, 11, 12, 13, 18, 21 and 22.

Forest Plan Management Areas (MA) 1, 3, 10, 8.3, 11, 12, 16, 17, 19, 20 have been validated in the project area by the Interdisciplinary Team (Drafted June 2016). Management Area specific Standards and Guidelines will be followed.

All management areas are stratified by fishery and water quality objectives. These objectives provide management direction in terms of the acceptable sediment budgets for each prescription watershed (see Forest Plan, Appendix A). In the project area, the Fishery/Water Quality objectives are to maintain 70 percent (P. Creek, Indian Creek), 80 percent (S. Creek, Shingle Creek) fishery habitat potential for resident or anadromous fish species by watershed. S. Creek and Shingle Creek watersheds allow timber management concurrent with improvement efforts, as long as a positive upward trend in habitat carrying capacity is indicated. The project will follow PACFISH interim direction.

The Salmon-Face Idaho Roadless Area with the Backcountry Restoration Theme is within the Windy-Shingle project area. The Rapid River Idaho Roadless Area, with the Wildland Recreation theme, is adjacent to this project area. The project will consider activities in the Salmon-Face Idaho Roadless area, following the Idaho Roadless Rule direction. The Forest will be working with the Idaho Roadless Commission, as needed.

This project will be developed to comply with all relevant and applicable laws and regulations, including, but not limited to, the Endangered Species Act, Clean Water Act, Clean Air Act, Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, and Idaho State Water Quality Standards.

Purpose and Need for Action

Based on observed existing conditions, as well as other supporting information (e.g. annual insect and disease aerial detection surveys, national insect and disease risk maps, community wildfire protection plan, input from local community members), there is a need to:

- Reduce the risk or extent of, or increase resilience to, insect or disease infestation of the landscape;
- Reduce wildfire risk to the local communities, private lands within the Forest Boundary and surrounding federal lands;

Collaboration

The Windy-Shingle Project will be developed in a collaborative manner. The Forest Service will seek input from local landowners, state and local government elected and appointed officials, groups and organizations with interest in public lands, guides and permittees using the project area, and other interested parties in scoping this project.

The project will be described at a public collaboration meeting where resource specialists (Wildlife Biologists, Hydrologists, Fisheries Biologists, Silviculturalists, etc.) from the Forest Service will be available to answer questions regarding the project goals and anticipated activities with respect to their disciplines. The public is encouraged to provide feedback at the meeting, or to provide it to the Team Leader at a later date.

The Forest Service will consider all input in the context of the project goals and objectives, laws and regulations, and Forest Plans in developing the final project plans.